SOUTH DAKOTA REHABILITATION COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

December 30, 2009

Governor M. Michael Rounds State Capitol Building 500 East Capitol Avenue Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Governor Rounds:

On behalf of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council), I am pleased to provide you with a copy of our annual report. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, specifies that a report be submitted to you and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on an annual basis.

The following pages reflect the activity of the Board and Division of Rehabilitation Services this past year. This activity has had a tremendous impact on the lives of South Dakotans with disabilities. One outcome is that 598 individuals with disabilities accomplished their employment goals in careers of their choice as a result of services received from the Division.

The Board and Division will continue working cooperatively to provide services to citizens with disabilities seeking employment, and we thank you for your support of our efforts.

Respectfully,

Beth Hang

Beth Haug, Chairperson

Cc: Board Members

Edward Anthony, Deputy Commissioner

Sue Rankin White, RSA Liaison

South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **State Rehabilitation Council** – is established in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act) and 34 CFR 361.16-361.17 of its implementing regulations.

The State Rehabilitation Council - known in South Dakota as the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** – gives advice to and works in partnership with the vocational rehabilitation agency in South Dakota - **Division of Rehabilitation Services**.

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively.

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation works in partnership with the Division of Rehabilitation Services in developing policies, planning activities, evaluating program effectiveness and carrying out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program.

The working relationship between the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** and the **Division of Rehabilitation Services** is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Membership

Beth Haug, Hermosa Chairperson

Dan Rounds, Pierre Vice Chairperson

Elaine Roberts, Sioux Falls Member-At-Large

Melissa Flor Pierre

Kathy Hassebrook Aberdeen

Lyle Cook Eagle Butte

Cindy Koupal Pierre

Craig Eschenbaum Aberdeen

Robert Kean Pierre

Chris Olson Madison

Grady Kickul Pierre

Matt Cain Sioux Falls

Mary l'atala Pine Ridge

Joe Rehurek Yankton

James Hayes Hot Springs

Staff: Faith Ellis Colette Wagoner **MEMBERSHIP:** The State Rehabilitation Council or Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (Board) is appointed by the Governor to assist the Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) to develop and evaluate employment services for South Dakotans with disabilities.

The Board's fifteen members are a cross-section of South Dakotans who have a stake in vocational rehabilitation services. They are selected based on personal qualifications and the needs of the Board. Members serve three year terms.

The Board works jointly with the Division to develop and annually review vocational rehabilitation goals and priorities. In addition, the Board contributes to the study of consumer satisfaction and customer service needs.

ABOUT THE BOARD

MEETINGS: Through quarterly meetings and public forums, the Board consults widely with consumers, advocates, employers, educators, and many others to build effective communication between the vocational rehabilitation program and the community it serves.

All meetings are publicly announced, open and accessible to the public. The Board may also hold hearings and forums, as they deem necessary. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, in cooperation with Division and Board staff, as stipulated in the bylaws.

Meetings

November 13-14, 2008 Pierre

March 11-12, 2009 Pierre

June 11-12, 2009 Aberdeen

September 30th October 1st, 2009 Ft. Pierre There are three standing committees through which the Board conducts a good deal of its work. Board members use conference calls, video conferencing and face-to-face meetings, prior to or during quarterly meetings, to conduct their business. The work of the committees is reported at each meeting for the full Board's consideration and action. These committees are noted below, along with their assigned activities.

Executive Committee: This committee may act on behalf of the Board to perform necessary business matters between regular meetings, provided their actions receive concurrence of the full Board. They also bring recommendations to the full Board on the following: Annual Report, State Plan, Board staff support agreement, new member orientation, legislative agenda and meeting agendas.

Consumer Services Committee: Their role includes involvement with the consumer satisfaction survey, review of State goals and strategies, recommendation of systems change priorities, collaborating with the Division's Futures Initiative workgroup, policy review and recommendations, and public meeting topics and process.

Public Awareness Committee: This committee focuses on National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities and Governor's Awards nominations and Juncheon.

BOARD ACTIVITIES

State Plan/Public Meetings/Gathering Public Input

The Board's first meeting of the fiscal year was planned to coincide with a meeting of the South Dakota Association of Community Based Services' (SDACBS) members. The nineteen SDACBS Members are community agencies that are certified by the South Dakota Department of Human Services to provide services and supports that meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Community Service Providers serve over 2600 people in a variety of settings. This was an opportunity for conversation about vocational rehabilitation services and how to better serve South Dakotans with disabilities.

The second quarterly meeting was planned to coincide with meetings of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Statewide Independent Living Council. Each had their separate meetings, but time was also planned to come together. The joint meeting started with introductions to Department of Human Services senior staff, overview of their duties, and an overview of the Department's strategic plan (mission, guiding principles, and goal areas). Following, the chairperson or representative of each board/council shared information of their respective group's activities. The remaining time was designed for the group to have conversation on how the Boards and Council collaborated in the past, how they are collaborating presently and how they might collaborate in the future. The comments were gathered and shared with the three entities.

The Boards of VR and SBVI and the SILC decided to have regular meetings of the chairpersons, and the chairpersons would act as liaisons between the groups. Discussions have continued regarding possible collaborative efforts, joint committees, and hosting a joint meeting in June 2010.

The Board had representatives attend the Partners in Policymaking graduation session. There was a facilitated discussion on a variety of issues which impact persons living with a disability (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, independent living, transportation, education, housing, and Social Security).

The Board's third quarterly meeting was held in conjunction with the Youth Leadership Forum and Richard Pimentel training designed for human resource managers and employers. First, members heard conversation between youth, legislative panel members and other local/state leaders. Second, members heard how to better understand returning veterans and their needs, how to best serve them and support their integration into the workforce.

Throughout the year, the Board continues to review and analyze information gathered through different means: meetings with consumers, family members, boards, councils, associations, employers, and human resource managers; information gathered through consumer satisfaction surveys, case file reviews, and statewide needs assessments. This information is considered when reviewing and updating the Division's State Plan document. The role of evaluating progress towards accomplishing the tasks, strategies and goals of the Division is an ongoing one.

Areas targeted by both the Board and Division include:

- Increase the hourly earnings of consumers;
- Increase average hours worked per week;
- Increase the number of individuals with disabilities who are working;
- Youth transitioning from high school to adulthood.

ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

Connecting Employers and Rehabilitation Professionals and addressing workforce issues by providing a qualified applicant pool to prospective employers.

The Board continues to gather information, obtain feedback, and consult with partners across the state. The Employer Resource Network is another developing partnership. Several board members have been involved in the creation of this network, which involves the Aberdeen Area Human Resource Association, Freedom to Work Project, and Division. The Employer Resource Network (ERN) was established to address diversity issues and labor needs in communities by sharing information, resources, educational opportunities and also creating opportunities to network.

Freedom to Work Project staff are exploring Project SEARCH, and sharing information with the Board. This program was started at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, and it provides a comprehensive approach to employment, job retention and career advancement for individuals with disabilities. The key is healthcare executives taking the lead in their organizations to increase employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities and to advocate on behalf of their employment to other organizations in their communities. This process also educates employers about an underutilized workforce while meeting their human resource needs.

Division staff are meeting with the Business Leadership Network (BLN) Steering Committee who are wanting to reexamine their progress and efforts. This is an employer led endeavor that promotes best employment practices and enhances competitive employment opportunities for skilled candidates with disabilities.

The Division and Board realize the importance of having links to each of these groups, and thus a staff member has been identified from each of the communities to work with them. These projects are being viewed as "catalysts for change", in the business community, human resource community, and rehabilitation professional community.

- Board, Division, and Client Assistance Program staff spent time during the November meeting reviewing "Back to the Basics". Sections of the State Rehabilitation Council Training modules were reviewed and an overview of South Dakota Advocacy Services and the Client Assistance Program were provided.
- Financial assistance was provided to several communities to host Americans with Disabilities Act Anniversary Celebrations. These activities involved individuals with disabilities, family members, representatives of Mayor's Committees and Centers for Independent Living, city employees and employers.
- * Co-hosted the Governor's Awards Luncheon with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This annual event recognizes the efforts of individuals, employers and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities.
- Financial assistance was provided to twelve communities to host National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities. These are community events which provide information and education to the public regarding the strengths and talents that people with disabilities bring to the workforce.
- The Board and Statewide Independent Living Council coordinated efforts to disseminate nomination packets during the month of March. Hundreds of nomination forms were disseminated to disability organizations, State agencies, Governor appointed boards and councils, and other interested individuals.
- The Board provided financial support to members to participate in various training events across the state, providing them an opportunity to listen and learn about various issues impacting people with disabilities.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

Who We Serve

- The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program served 5,139 South Dakotans, compared to 5,050 last fiscal year.
- There were 2,509 new applicants, compared to 2,221 applicants last fiscal year.
- The average age of the applicant was 35.7 years of age.
- 38% of VR participants had two or more serious functional limitations.
- 33% of Vocational Rehabilitation's participants are transition age, up to 24 years of age.
- 31% of Vocational Rehabilitation's participants report a serious mental illness as their primary disability.
- 35% of VR participants receive either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Vocational Rehabilitation's Outcomes

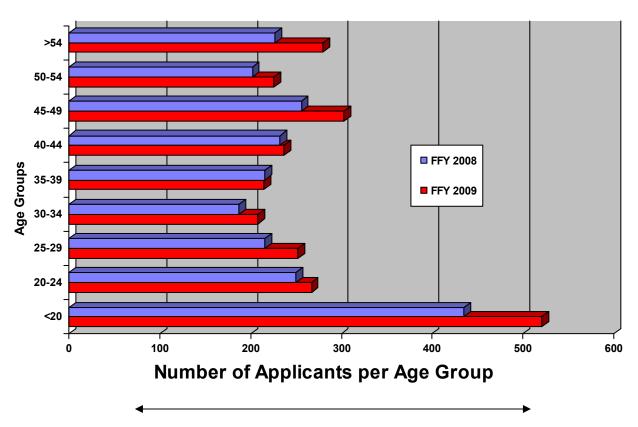
- 598 Vocational Rehabilitation participants obtained employment.
 - 97% of the employment outcomes were at minimum wage or above.
 - Of those obtaining employment, 123 (22%) utilized formal supports with an average wage of \$7.52/hr.
 - Upon completion of the VR program, participants working above minimum wage worked an average of 28.55 hours.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is a comprehensive program designed to assist individuals with significant disabilities in making career decisions and reaching their employment goals.

Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

The Division had a total of 2,509 individuals apply for vocational rehabilitation services in fiscal year 2009. The following chart depicts the number of applicants served per age group.

Number of Applicants Per Age Group (10/01/2008 to 9/30/2009)



⇒ There were 2,509 new applicants this fiscal year, which is a 15% increase from the previous year.

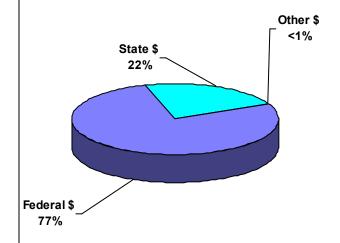
Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance...

At 47.8%, South Dakota ranks as the fourth highest state in the nation concerning the employment rate of people with disabilities who are working. The national average is 36.2%.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Serving a Diverse Population

3.5	
Caucasian	86%
American Indian	11%
African American	2%
Asian	1%
Pacific/Hawaiian	<1%

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding Sources in 2009



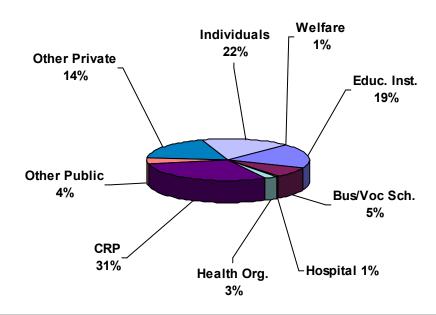
In fiscal year 2009, the average annual income of consumers rehabilitated was \$13,928.20. Prior to rehabilitation, the average income was \$2,938.00.

Vocational Rehabilitation Participants Receiving SSI/SSDI at Application

SSI	SSDI	SSI & SSDI	Total	Percent of Total VR Caseload
430	501	113	1,044	35%

The average hourly wage of individuals employed was \$9.38 after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures

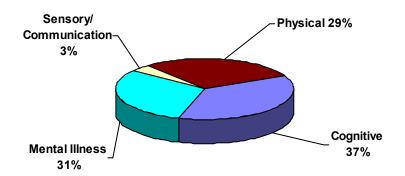


Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance.... After receiving services from VR and at time of closure, there was an increase in consumer's wages and hours worked per week in competitive employment.

Fiscal Year 2009 Performance Outcomes

Performance Description	At Application	At Closure	Percent of Improvement
Increase in individuals obtaining medical insurance through employment	30	107	306%
Increase in individuals where wages are primary source of support	146	658	451%
Increase of weekly wages	\$56.50	\$267.85	474%

The primary impairment of eligible individuals seeking vocational rehabilitation services included:



Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance...

The largest referral source for applicants is the individual themselves (self-referral); the categories include:

Referral Source	Percentage
Self	27%
Post & Secondary Education	18%
Dept of Labor	11%
Community Rehabilitation Programs	10%
Other	9%
Friends/Family	7%
Medical Agencies	7%
Mental Health Center	7%
SSA	2%
Welfare	1%
Corrections	1%

Project Skills

Many students with significant disabilities do not have an opportunity to gain paid employment experience while in high school. This is an important learning, maturing and socializing experience. Although willing, most employers cannot afford the supports these students frequently require on their first job.

The state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies—Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) fund a program entitled "Project Skills" to address this need.

Project Skills is a cooperative arrangement between VR Agencies and the local school systems. The State VR Agencies fund the wages, worker's compensation and FICA while the schools provide job development, job coaching and follow-along services for the student at the job site. In addition to vocational rehabilitation services, consumers receive other types of assistance. The following reflects a broad array of entities that the Division works with to fulfill the consumer's employment goals.

Programs	Number of Consumers Involved		
Dept. of Labor	231		
Mental Health Center	200		
Social Services	151		
Supported Employment	123		
Community Service Providers	75		
Drug/Alcohol Treat- ment	68		
Treatment Facility (Residential)	47		
Probation/Parole	45		
Career Learning	41		
Other VR Agencies	20		
Honorably Dis- charged Veteran	17		
Independent Living Center	9		
Projects w/Industry	1		

Public Input...

Ways to let the Board and Division know your thoughts.

You can call:

Voice/TTY: 605-945-2207Toll Free: 800.210.0143

You can fax:

605.945.2242

You can write:

Chairperson, Board of Vocational Rehabilitation; 221
 South Central Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota, 57501

You can attend a meeting: All Board meetings are public. Copies of the meeting agendas can be obtained by calling:

- 605.945.2207 (Voice or TTY)
- 800.210.0143

You can become a member:
If you are interested in becoming a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, an application can be obtained by calling:

605.945.2207 (Voice or TTY)